



The A Void Collective Fanzine

Issue 7, March/April 2026

FREE



BOILERS

Leicester's original Riot Women on Finnish audiences, the explosion of all-women punk bands in their home city, and that BBC drama



INSIDE:

Emmi Fortune

The Women Who Run The Lab

Sophia from Bloody/Bath

Bev from Audio Works & Bitter Sweet Smile

Guitar Tech Kai

Opal

House of Cats

Cheap Bleach

Kieran Stowell

wūlv

...and loads more

OUR MANIFESTO

No one should be excluded from performing their music in public because of their neurotype, disability, age, or inexperience. A band playing their first gig is as valuable as someone playing their thousandth, and the age of a performer has no bearing on how good they are or whether they should be given good gigs.

Some neurotypes and mental health conditions make it harder for musicians to find opportunities and make networking an impossible task, which means the gigs don't come. We aim to remove that barrier.

We understand that some music is deemed too 'weird' to be given good gigs: that's wrong, they shouldn't be relegated to the outer edges of open mic nights - they should be on the bills at proper gigs, with their name on the poster.

We are a group of musicians from various bands, and we aim for full inclusivity, to give valuable shows to the people who are ignored by some of the gatekeepers. We stand against ageism, ableism, exclusion of any kind, and favouritism. We stand for the overlooked and marginalised.

We make each gig valuable to the acts performing, with long-lasting impact. We have an etiquette guide that makes the shows stress-free, and once the gig has ended, we do things for the acts who have performed, whether it's recording them cheaply (or even free), helping with instrument repairs, or enabling them to go and do what we do elsewhere.

There was a void, and we filled it.

Read the long version at <https://linktr.ee/avoidcollective>

Editor's Note

Guest editor Cheryl Botten-Smith writes

Why are women so underrepresented in the music scene? This is something I have noticed over the last couple of years and often wondered to myself.

I was going to a lot of gigs to watch local bands, including people I've become good friends with, and quite often there wouldn't be a single female in the line-up, not one! It didn't make any sense to me, especially as there were plenty of women at the gigs, obviously appreciating the music. Women make up more than half of the population, yet they're horribly overlooked in local scenes across most of the country. I decided to do something about it. After an all-inclusive alcohol fuelled chat on a gloriously sunny beach in Crete on my honeymoon, I decided I wanted to learn to play bass guitar. I started (somewhat tentatively) in September 2025, and I am now one half of House of Cats, with our first album released and having already gigged. I am absolutely loving it, and now know that there should be no barriers! If I can go from never having held a bass at the end of the summer to standing on the stage of the Black Prince enveloped in fuzz, so can you. Nothing is going to hold me back! It's hard to put into words, but the nearest I can come up with is that playing music makes me feel alive. The creation of something new out of nothing is like a form of magic!

Recently, I sat down to watch the new BBC drama 'Riot Women' on TV. The thought of watching a group of middle-aged women, not unlike myself, forming a band from scratch was empowering and exciting. The show had received mostly good reviews, and the cast was a who's who of British TV and cinema talent, faces we've all grown to know over the last 30 years.

Overall, I really enjoyed it; 'Riot Women' had some positives and negatives, but the message was powerful. I loved the punky expression of women's issues, such as menopause being proudly performed as front and centre by the fictional band, but I found the acting was

a bit over dramatic and the characters somewhat unbelievable and one-dimensional. Also, every single male in the show appeared to be portrayed as either utterly useless or misogynistic (and I mean *every single one*! They were presented as either pathetic saps, weirdo sex pests, or violent aggressors), which is not my experience of the world, thankfully! But the essence of a band of 40 and 50-something women coming together and performing punk songs about real women's issues was an absolute winner.

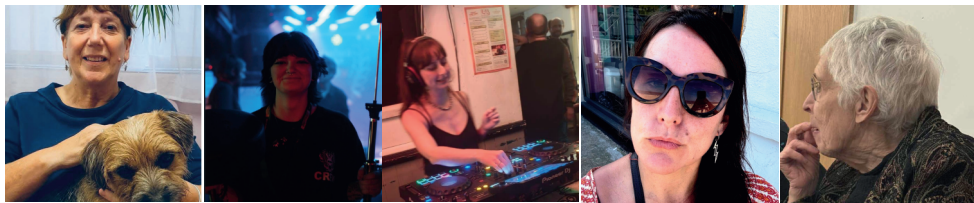
I then learned that 'Riot Women' the TV show had been heavily inspired by a real-life group of all-women bands in Leicester, called the Riotous Collective, who had started a movement aimed at getting women of all ages and abilities into playing music. Now that is empowerment! The work of the Riotous Collective has seen an explosion of female punk bands in the city and has revitalised the local scene.

A Void has connected with Riotous, and we are incredibly excited to be bringing you Boilers (the writers of 'Give Me', a song partially plagiarised by the BBC in a particularly uncool move in 'Riot Women') to our March show. We hope that seeing Barbe, Fish, and Whizzie of Boilers might inspire women in the audience with a sense of 'that could be me on that stage'. We really need to increase the number of women of all ages in the local scene and take our share of the limelight, and no one else is going to do it if we don't.



"Community, Creativity, Expression and Authenticity"

The women who keep The Lab running speak



l/r: Sheila, Jazmine, Kirsty, Tanya, and Pam

Sheila Cox:

I'm Sheila, The Lab Secretary. Have been for 4 years, after answering a request for 2 hours a week for admin. Now more like 20 volunteer hours! Sharing the role with Pam. I love music! Pretty much all genres, just can't do the loud gigs now. After 50 years listening to and dancing to all types of music, I have settled on Folk, Blues and Americana.

So I am pleased to have been able to promote these type of gigs through The Lab. Sometimes they are big names on the circuit, sometimes local musicians. All good.

As an ex- Mental Health Practitioner, I realised from research how important it is as humans, we have opportunities to experience, listening to music or dancing to music or creating music.

Kirsty Wilkins:

I've been involved with The Lab for 10+ years and have at some point been in every role, chair, secretary, promoter, operations manager and am currently the treasurer. It's been a passion project for a long time as I feel like it's the most precious space we have in Northampton for community, creativity, expression and authenticity. I've been at The Lab throughout some extremely challenging times as well as magically beautiful ones!

I'm proud of seeing it through multiple times when we could potentially have closed down if we hadn't been so determined and

resourceful. Really proud of the community we continue to build and the range of events we host. My favourite recent projects are The Women's DJ Course, which grew into MiXX Lab Collective and also the Community Choir with Nerissa Simmone.

My wishes for The Lab are for it to be full of people attending gigs, financially sustainable, and to see the younger generation coming through to put on their own events and take on the baton for the future.

Tanya Falconer:

I'm still relatively new to The Lab, having joined as Events Manager in October last year, but it already feels like home.

Born in Dublin, I've taken a slightly scenic route to Northampton via Brisbane and London. I've worked in the music industry in one form or another for years, and when the opportunity came up to join The Lab family, it felt like perfect timing and exactly where I was meant to land.

What I love about our team is that while we share a genuine love of live music, we each gravitate towards different genres. That mix of tastes is what shapes our calendar. It's a group effort! I'm proud of being involved in my first Independent Venue Week 2026. And I love working alongside our promoters to ensure their nights are a success.

Please reach out if you have an idea for an event or wish to play thelabgigs@gmail.com

My wishes for The Lab are for people to understand the importance of having such a venue in their community and supporting it. To have a full room with artists and audiences connecting, and a place for everyone to feel welcome.

See you at the bar!

Jazmine Higgins, Sound Engineer:

I'm proud of how far the Lab has come in the past year I've been here, and I have the pleasure of working with so many amazing people and bands. I can't wait to see what the future holds! I'd love to get some heavier bands in to try and promote the metal scene in Northampton more. And to get more women sound engineers in the area!

Pam Law:

Despite moving to Northampton more than 20 years ago I only discovered the Lab in 2022, and it has become my happy place. It is important as a venue for all-around creativity and general kindness to all.

I sort of help with the admin and sit at the door in, I hope, a welcoming way as I ask for your money or just say hello.

It has opened my ears to music genres I missed the first time and also to an amazing range of talent, both young and old.

My hope and my aim is to do all I can to make sure it is here for many years to come to nurture the creativity of all.

A Head Full of Rough Ideas

We fire some questions at Kieran Stowell.

AVC: You've been back playing music now for a little while. How's it been for you?

KS: During my university years, I spent almost every waking moment either writing or playing at open mics/small gigs.

However, after I graduated, I found myself broke, depressed and generally uninspired. So I relegated the music to something I just did when I felt in the mood, with no intention of making it publicly available to others.

But in the past couple of years, I have reignited that spark in both writing and live performance, and generally it's been great so far. I have learned to be less critical of myself which has helped with the writing, and I have found people enjoy my songs more than I had ever expected, which is a great motivator to not only keep playing, but to keep working on new material.

AVC: What's the experience of working with NLP Records been like?

KS: Working with NLP Records has been excellent so far. They have been extremely supportive and have really pushed to promote my work, as I am terrible at doing it myself!

I have also been working with one of its members, Harry Mockett, a genius who has been recording and producing my songs at Towerview Studios.

AVC: Have you faced any barriers in the last year that you think need to be dealt with in the local scene?

KS: Admittedly, my time in the Northampton live circuit so far has been Open Mic Nights, and really, the barriers I have found with them can easily be applied to most artists, especially those who prefer to play original material.

As someone whose vocals have been described as abrasive and songs as depressing, it can be hard to find an audience who actually engages with you, simply because you neither sound conventionally "good" or play songs that they recognise, so finding a venue that accommodates you is difficult.

Also, some of these places bow down to their regulars, so if

you're not popular enough to make friends (or just not the sociable kind), you end up losing out on further opportunities.

Really it'd be just nice to see people be given an opportunity, without them having to sacrifice who they are, or the art they choose to make, just to appeal to certain audiences.

AVC: What was the response to your debut single?

KS: Going into the studio to record 'Rough Ideas' was a challenge for me, as I merely recorded my guitar and vocals, and then sat quietly as Harry worked on the track. Admittedly, watching him made me squeamish at first, as he played

around with all sorts of ideas, which I was worried went against what the song was about.

I was wrong to feel that way, as it turns out he had understood the song better than I had, and the final result is a reflection of that.

That being said, I was still unsure of my vocals at first, and refused to believe all the positivity I was receiving from friends, family and strangers online. So I went for a walk across The Racecourse, played it at full volume, through noise-cancelling headphones, and

it completely changed my view. I could not be prouder of the song. Since then, I have released another single called 'Stranger on a Train' and will be working on another with Harry as soon as possible.

AVC: What's coming up in 2026 that you're most looking forward to?

KS: 2026 is the year I will finally release my debut album. The majority of the songs I have recorded/will be recording I have held onto for at least 10 years, and I want to get them out into the world.

Currently, I am about halfway through recording, so looking forward to providing more details soon!

Kieran Stowell is playing the Lab on April 30th alongside Cheap Bleach, Skybeard, and wülv



HANGING THE FUCK ON

EMMI FORTUNE

speaks to Andrew Slack



AS: Hi Emmi. You played for AVC last year at the Solstice Festival but I'm not sure the zine even existed then, so this is a good opportunity to tell the readers a bit about yourself

What are you listening to at the moment and who would you say you are influenced by?

EF: I've mostly been listening to the most recent Alkaline Trio album (Blood, Hair & Eyeballs) and I've been getting into Sleep Token a lot as well. I resisted them for a long time because they rose to fame super fast which usually says "industry plant" but I actually fucking love their multi-genre vibe at the moment.

For the second part of your question, I'm influenced by so much, honestly. I'm stupidly eclectic. The big one is gonna be true for a lot of songwriters, I think, and that's Bob Dylan. Suzanne Vega is a massive influence on me, too, and even some more modern people like Ren, for instance. I love artists who write about real issues and tragedies; all the dark stuff that makes life so rich and varied. The light can't exist without the dark, after all.

AS: You're opening for us at the end of the month. What can we expect?

EF: Tom Waits once said "I like beautiful melodies telling me terrible things" and that's pretty much what I try to emulate in my songs. I tend to fingerpick my guitar which gives it a super lilly, folky vibe, and my voice in general has been described as "sweet" or sometimes even "angelic" (barf) but I really enjoy the juxtaposition of that blended with my lyrics which tend to be about things like addiction, domestic violence, the darker side of the human experience.

AS: Boilers are headlining the show, representing Leicester's Riotous Collective. What are your thoughts on something similar existing in Northampton?

EF: I'd love that, honestly. I'd be delighted to be involved if such a thing sprang up. However, I confess I did recently move out of Northampton, hahaha, but I'm not far away!

AS: And finally, what are your ambitions for the future?

EF: To tell you the truth, like most working class people at this current time, my ambitions right now are pretty much to hang the fuck on and not die. The world is fucking burning and there doesn't seem to be a lot we can do here at ground level to stop it, except to take care of those around us and try to live by example. Music-wise, I'm working on an EP at the moment, which will be called "Songs for Dead Girls". Hopefully that will be out later this year. Also of course I am delighted to be included on the new A Void CD, along with some impeccable and worthy artists, so thank you very much for inviting me to be a part of that.

Emmi Plays the Lab on March 26th

"We're a DIY band before genre"

we sent **Louis Sefton** to ask **Cheap Bleach** some questions



photo by [instagram.com/caseyshootspeople](https://www.instagram.com/caseyshootspeople)

LS: Tell us a bit about who you are - how would you explain Cheap Bleach to someone who has never encountered you before?

CB: It depends on who we're talking to! To someone with less awareness of alternative music, we might say 'a punk band from Milton Keynes'. To someone in Milton Keynes, we'd probably say 'a punk band who practices in Milton Keynes, with members from around Buckinghamshire'. To someone who knows a lot about alternative music, we could say 'a melodic post-hardcore/emo band' or, simply, 'we sound a bit like Title Fight'.

On a more philosophical level, I'd say that we're a DIY band before genre. Until recently, all of our music was self-produced, we do all our own artwork, we've even started to burn and package our own CDs. When we have branched out of the four of us, for merch designs and producing our last two tracks, it's always someone who shares our values. Even if it's not always present in our sound, the ethos and ethics of punk and hardcore are important to us.

LS: You've had quite a year, what's been your highlight of the last 12 months?

CB: There's been a bunch of cool moments, like playing outdoors at a skatepark for Headcharge Club - for a very Tony Hawk-core band like us, that was fun - but playing at The Lab is always a highlight. We did our first show there, and we had our first mosh pit there; it's such a great DIY venue, the staff are lovely and there's always a cool show on!

LS: Is there anything you would have rather avoided?

CB: Promoters that require you to sell a certain number of tickets to get paid or get a certain spot on the bill! They're evil and the shows always suck because everyone there is just doing a favour for their mates. It's just pay to play in disguise, and the people doing it do not care about music at all. We did one in London where we only got paid the full amount (20% of ticket sales, by the way) if we brought a certain number of people. We didn't hit the threshold and, as a result, got paid a whopping £7.15! We don't do this to get paid, and we'd rather play a show for free for people we like, but that's just embarrassing.

LS: What's coming up for the band in 2026

CB: We're hoping to get back into the studio at some point to record a few more tracks, then put out an EP in the autumn/wintertime. In the meantime, we'll be gigging around Bucks/Northampton, and hopefully get added to a few of the festivals we've applied for.

LS: Is there anyone else you think we should be checking out locally?

CB: Mum and Dad Talk to Animals! We're biased because Josh used to be in our band, and his brother Mike replaced him, but they're so good! A silver lining of Josh not being in the band anymore is that we can actually play shows with them now, which is great.

I don't know if they're still together or not, but we've got to shout out Piss Machine. We played our first show with them, and they always come out to support us when we're in Northampton. They're the nicest band with 'Piss' in their name.

Sophia from
Bloody/Bath
tells us of her
experiences in
music



What is your experience as a female musician in a local scene that (like a lot of other towns) is still rather dominated by men?

Being in a band that's fronted by a man and is comprised of men other than me, I think, might insulate me a bit from much outright misogyny. I don't really get the kind of condescending remarks where people question whether I know what I'm doing with equipment or musically. That said, I've been sexually assaulted by men involved in music. That kind of very reified misogyny is definitely present and remains a problem, even in spaces that are ostensibly 'progressive'

Tell us a bit about your musical journey, and what it's like being in Bloody/bath?

B/b is fun! We formed about five or six years ago after Kailan's initial bedroom stuff did well and we've just got louder and noisier since really. They are a bunch of stinky boys but I love them.

What do you do outside of playing bass for B/B? Any other projects or musical things going on?

I also DJ! I was doing a queer night in Northampton called Superpuss with Lewchs, which is now mainly based in London. I'm sure we'll be back in Northampton sometime soon. This year, I'm trying to branch out into doing more raves and other events.

Finally, what is the most important issue that you think isn't being addressed properly in the U.K. right now?

The legal bullshit going on with trans rights is often quite impenetrable and odd. The latest court ruling seems to be saying trans people can use the toilets of the gender they identify as in public, unless they're at work? It's so obviously silly and impractical, I'd encourage people to read more about the situation, but don't expect it to make any sense.

<https://bloodybath.bandcamp.com/>

GEAR CHAT

We asked married post punk shoegaze duo
House of Cats what their favourite gear is.



photo by Louis Sefton

Cheryl (bass and backing vocals):

"My pedals, my Ibanez PhatHed and Boss Super Chorus especially, and the Golden Horse overdrive! I love the range of different sounds they give me, oh, and I love the B-Box boost I have, that whomp of volume is great!"

Alex (guitar, drum programming and vocals)

"I've fallen in love with Jaguars since being in the band, having been a Jazzmaster guy for years. As for pedals, the blue Fuzz Face Mini is great, much louder and grittier than the clones I've had. My sound is a lot of delays and reverbs running into each other, so I'd be lost without them, the Sonicake Sonic Ambience is especially good with the reverse delay setting. The Audio Error 30dB dual mono boost is a custom order work of genuis!"



House of Cats play the Lab on the 26th of March with Boilers, Opal, and Emmi Fortune and then again on the 3rd of April with Piss Shivers and Psydoll

POETRY

Early Retirement

Thought I could take the critics words
But maybe I am wrong
I asked my friends why no one clapped
When I finished my songs
You were out of tune they all replied
And your timing wasn't good
Your themes are boring, sad and dour
From what we understood
You see you mumble out your lyrics
So your songs all sound the same
And as you don't play with a band
It's you who is to blame
Why did you wear that awful shirt?
And sit when you should stand
The set's too long and turgid
Surely you should command
An instrument before playing this stuff live
And singing about politics?
It all sounds too contrived
I nod slowly and try to
Absorb this info in
Leave by the fire exit
Guitar dumped by the bin

Russell Heyworth

Ghosts

An old man died on that spot
And now he stands there
Rolling his heels as the whole house creaks
Gazing from the window to an empty street
This is what I told myself as I trembled in the dark

Another house in another time
The room had an unsettling shape, disturbing
my mind
I was much too scared to sleep, so I put
Funhouse on repeat
And Iggy's grunts and wails were my comfort
till the dawn

And as a child, feverish in bed
A figure by my side, I pulled the covers tight
about my head
And I swear although my eyes were closed
a strange symbol formed on the ceiling -
I must have dozed
In the morning it was gone

But always in dreams
Where there's no escape
A tightness, a shrill scream
And a feeling that something will break
As pressure builds I wrench myself from sleep
Looking around only shadows and light
The world about to wake

Andrew Slack

PMT (Post eMPloyment Tension)

Northampton guitar tech **Kai Pearson**, on how they became an independent technician.

I've always been drawn towards two things: making music, and making things work better. It wasn't until after a whole decade of purely technical pursuits, that I learnt very unexpectedly I didn't have to choose between the two.

Initially, I pursued a career in Industrial Design & Technology (the design, manufacture, and engineering of physical things). But after spending 6 years under multiple technical specialisations, navigating what should have simply been a pragmatic and hands-on career, the sector itself turned out to be more steeped in corporate praxis and social performance than any of my degree's gruelling teachings prepared me for.

However, what it *did* prepare me for was the job I was lucky enough to stumble into, having returned jaded and exhausted back to Northampton. It started with a visit to PMT for some strings, where I spoke to the lovely Geoff, who revealed they were short staffed. So I took my shot, hoping to land in a down-to-earth work environment, where I could belong without having to constantly prove it, and 'come home' to music again.

I soon joined the best team of people I can honestly say I've ever worked with - and my contribution to said team came with the irresistible, at times derailing, urge to fix anything that needed repair around the shop. Before long, head technician and genius bassist (some might even say Pure Genius...) Heath, invited me to try some of the store's guitar tech work with him because he's "got a feeling about me".

Like many of the things Heath "gets a feeling" about: he was right.

In the years to come, I soaked up know-how from him and Jay (store manager and 'Northampton pentatonic' whisperer), alongside the teachings of Dan Erlewine and Gerry Hayes in my spare time. It felt a very natural transition; the musical and mechanical principles I'd already been engrossed in for so many years, gave a strong framework for my learnings. And I can't say I'll ever stop discovering more to learn.

That being said, some things do come to an end. On a day off in June 2025, I got a phone call: "You need to come to the store right now, something's happened." I ran down Bridge Street as fast as I could. As I approached, I saw the store was locked to the public. Two suits were standing inside, my workmates gathered around looking solemn. I joined them.

"I'm sorry, PMT has gone into administration, so we're here to shut you down." It was so sudden, and the directors had brushed off and placated all questions and concerns for months, right up to the final weeks beforehand. Even the Administrators were blindsided that we didn't already know.

My immediate thoughts went to the people whose guitars I'd serviced that were awaiting collection, and those in the queue yet to be done. Could I take them home and look after them so they don't get lost or damaged? I was promptly refused as they'd become the Administrator's property, but I couldn't stop thinking about it. If only they were *my* customers...

We went through all the limited information the Administrators could provide, got told to gather our belongings so they could take photos of the stock to auction off, made promises to have a reunion very soon, and went home jobless. I was one of the least fortunate redundancy-wise - entitled to an eventual payout of 2 weeks' worth of salary. Needless to say, I had to get my shit together pretty quickly.

From the next day onwards, I did what I know best - I started advertising my services as a guitar technician, putting flyers up around town, turning my just-for-fun GuitarTechKai instagram into a business page, and reconnecting with as many fellow musicians I'd met during my time at PMT.

With bills to pay and quickly disappearing savings, this was a major trust fall into the arms of the local music scene - and the response has been incredible. Every face that has come through my door, new and familiar, has been so kind and supportive. Every time someone new tells me they heard of my work from someone else, it truly makes my day. Both from their kindness, and from the knowledge that I made an impact on them and their experience of making music.

Though PMT's closure was and is devastating for the music community, it afforded me the freedom as a technician to provide more, at a level that brings me great satisfaction. And while I'm sure there is a balance to be achieved (the going rate for independent technicians is not at all kind to perfectionists!), I am rich in just about everything else.

I look forward to where this is headed, and I owe it all to everyone who has supported that journey so far. If you're ever in need of my services, I'm always delighted to help.

instagram.com/guitartechkai

Meet Opal



Opal is a new 5 piece Northampton band that plays alternative music. We asked them a few questions.

AVC: How did you get together?

Opal: We got together through school. We had a school talent show and decided to enter as we all wanted to showcase our passion for music to everyone.

AVC: What has been your highlight of being a band so far?

Opal: The highlight has definitely been playing our first gig at the King Billy music bar as we had such a big turnout with people coming along to watch and support the band.

AVC: What would you change if you could?

Opal: We would change the fact that we don't have original music out yet!

AVC: Where do you see the band in a year?

Opal: In a year's time we see the band playing loads of shows, making lots of music and having fun while doing so.

AVC: What's coming up next?

Opal: We have been working on releasing our first single 'move on' that we played for the first time at the King Billy music bar. We are also working on more music that we can hopefully release by the end of the year.

AVC: Where can people find more info?

Opal: People can find out more about us on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook by the username: opalband_

Opal play the Lab on the 26th of March with Boilers, House of Cats and Emmi Fortune

BOILERS

AB: You formed via the Riotous Collective. Can you tell us about how that came about?

Fish: I was at art school with Barbe, and saw an Unglamorous (before it changed to Riotous Collective) show with some debuts of brand new bands, and there was such a brilliant, supportive energy in the room that I decided I wanted in. Whizzie was already part of the movement. I asked Barbe if she wanted to join an older woman's punk band, and Barbe said, "I want to shout GIVE ME MY HRT". So Barbe signed us both up, and we went to the first session on Jan 8th 2023, with Ginny Flickers. Boilers was born.

Whizzie: I just so happened to pop into one of Boilers' rehearsals, and they were missing a bass player so I jumped in to help out. As the saying goes, that's history'

AB: The explosion of spiky, socially aware post-punk bands in Leicester looks really special from the outside. Is the reality matching the impression we get when looking in?

Fish: It's as incredible as it looks. Early on we felt like we'd found our tribe. Ruth Miller, who started it all, said, 'It's art rock, not a community project,' and I think that ethos has held fast. The punk/post punk stuff is not just empowering and liberating for the women in the project who get to stand on stage and represent a whole different demographic; it's wider than that. The music scene in Leicester has been transformed by this influx of around 30 all-women bands who come along to gigs with a fresh enthusiasm and no fucks to give. Gigs have become safe spaces, not just for women but for everyone. The bands have a host of allies, including younger bands, man bands and as the movement is so inclusive, more marginalised communities are supported and safe too. Our theme tune is Boilers Have Got Your Back, and we're pretty intimidating to look at, but we haven't had to physically fight anyone ... yet.

AB: My constant stress in putting on gigs is that no one will show up - has the RC initiative helped build an audience?

Fish: Yes. RC gigs are well known for attracting good audiences. The bands are engaging performers, saying exactly what they want to say, and that is appealing. It's great to see



WOMEN BOILERS

Boilers are a spiky post-punk band from Leicester, formed by **Fish, Whizzie, and Barbe**. While sitting on a beach in Cabo Verde, **Alex Botten** emailed them some questions.

women in an audience who have not experienced the RC effect looking just joyous. We frequently have women approach us saying they're inspired. We've found if we make interesting music in an unfettered way, create a safe place for audiences and move out into our community of existing bands, the joy is infectious and people want to come and see us.

AB: The other thing I found, as a musician in my 50s, is that many doors that were wide open in my 20s are now suspiciously closed. Have you had any experience with that? If so, how have you addressed it?

Fish: We were not musicians back then, and that is part of it, I think. We're approaching things brand new and have no idea of those doors. In broader terms, we know a lot of women who didn't feel confident to make music or get into bands when they were young. The effect of one woman, Ruth, saying to other women that they can get into bands and onto stages is amazing. The permission is there in a city that has taken the movement to its heart. Have we experienced difficult doors now? Possibly. It's as hard for us as any band to get onto a festival line-up or to be noticed by, for example, Loud Women - but things are happening gradually.

AB: So, Boilers the band, how would you describe yourselves to anyone who had never heard you before?

Fish: Boilers is three big women making punk music and having a ball doing it. We're a band to be seen and experienced. We enjoy ourselves, embrace our chaos and invite our audiences into our Boilerverse with us. We're funny. The points we make with our banging and shouting are serious ones, just delivered in a funny way. We are serious fun.

AB: What's been the highlight of being in the band so far?

Fish: Every time an audience loves us we're delighted. We love Boilers, but it's just great when others do too. We were invited to Finland last March to launch a Finnish version of Riotous, called Rhythm Revolution. Playing in Helsinki and Tampere and finding out that the reserved Finns also loved us was a brilliant highlight. We played our first festival last year, which was fab, Barefoot Festival.

AB: Would you recommend forming a band to other women or people from marginalised groups?

Fish: I absolutely would recommend it! I always say it's the best thing I've ever done, and I've done a lot of things. Being in Boilers is like family, and we find each other as annoying and lovable as families do. There are probably other models of band life, but Boilers is intense and rewarding.

Whizzie: I would recommend forming a band to anyone who's interested. The best thing I've ever done. Before all of this, I felt I was just existing; now I feel like I'm having the time of my life. I gave up my full-time job and went part-time so I could have more time doing what I enjoy and love.

AB: Ok, the elephant in the room - BBC's "Riot Women". Cheryl and I watched it and found it a mixed bag; some of it was great, some of it was... not so great. But when the fictional band launched into a thinly disguised rewrite of your song "Give Me", it was a proper "WTF??" moment. How did it feel seeing your own reality essentially pillaged for entertainment (apparently without any acknowledgement by the Beeb)?

(Barbe growls)

AB: What's next for Boilers?

Fish: We have connected with loads of people all around the world, and we've been invited to Australia.

Wouldn't that be lovely? So we're putting it out to the Universe for some sponsorship for that. I could only go if I could lie down all the way, so we need a generous benefactor. Other than that, we want to get out and spread the word. We are working on our connections, so we hope to be getting out to new places this year. Our trip to The Lab is part of that plan.

Barbe: We think we would make a great festival band, as you don't have to like the genre of music or have listened to us before to enjoy the performance and our on-stage antics. We are equal parts rebellious, silly, confronting and affirming, with serious things to say in a way that people seem to enjoy!

Like if you went to visit your mum or granny and they were dressed in utility wear, gave you a big plate of scones with jam and cream, entertained you with slightly outrageous stories and sent you off, suggesting that whatever you do is fine by them as long as you don't hurt anyone else doing it. That's Boilers, really.

We'd like to metaphorically slip you a tenner for a treat, but in real life, we like to get a few quid to keep us in cake and cover the cost of some of our galavanting. We also print bespoke Boiler T-shirts and mugs, which people like to buy to show everyone how epic they are. We LOVE everyone who loves us, and quite a few who don't! ... Even people who don't love our music are still quite keen on the spectacle and atmosphere at our gigs... Boilers bring the party!

Boilers play the Lab on the 26th of March with House of Cats, Opal, and Emmi Fortune.

<https://weareboilers.bandcamp.com/album/weareboilers-demo-ep-0423>

REVIEWS

LIVE

Sunflowers and Oscillator

The Lab, 11/02/26



"We're a band, though we look like we should be fixing potholes", stated Carlos de Jesus, frontman of Porto's **Sunflowers**, midway through their Northampton headline show. He's not wrong, the band (also featuring drumming vocalist Carolina Brandão and singing bassist Frederico Ferreira) took to the stage at the Lab dressed in the kind of high-vis any council employee would be proud of.

Across a tight half-hour set, Sunflowers thrashed out banger after banger, merging the swirling best of the international psych underground with a controlled and deeply melodic noise rock. They were utterly charming, winning over the small but appreciative Wednesday night audience. If you missed them (and given the turnout, you almost certainly did), you're a fool.

Opening were local space cadets **Oscillator**. We've seen them blow the roof off the Lab, with their show last October being one of the best gigs of the entire of 2025. Tonight though, the empty space in front of the stage and a rather muddy and far too quiet PA mix left them pushing hard to hit the same highs. We're not saying they weren't as good, they absolutely were, with Jake, Charlie and Tom blasting out a fantastic set of future classics but something was missing. Oscillator need a wildly dancing audience to really take off, and that audience was nowhere to be seen.

Which brings us to the main issue. What the fuck, Northampton? We know it was a Wednesday, and we know that the headliners were not a local metal band called something like Scold's Bridle, or Thumbscrews, but where were you? We don't want to be scolding anyone, or appearing negative (especially after one local act accused us of publishing 'hate' in issue 6) but if you don't come to gigs the gigs will stop. There is only so much time and money that can be pumped into a scene without results before things start to break. Many of the local promoters have day jobs that they use to fund funding incredible bands to our town. They're not millionaires doing it for a hobby before they lose interest and move onto the next fad, they're real people doing it for love. Please repay them by engaging, or we'll all be poorer for it. (AB)

We take a look at recent releases from across Shoetown and beyond

SINGLES

Lightwell Tower "Stuck in 99"

What would happen if you blended West Coast Hiphop, the Streets, and (stay with us) 80's whimsy-popsters Frazier Chorus? Possibly you'd get the gentle pop of Lightwell Tower, whose new single has a guitar solo at the end that sounds like a saxophone. It's not going to change the world, but it'll pleasantly pass a couple of minutes in a time that increasingly feels like we're living in the news reports in the background of Robocop or Children of Men. (AB)

For I, The Badger "All Hail"

Bit late to this one as it was released at the tail-end of last year. No idea where they're from, though they're followed on IG by a lot of Peterborough bands, so that might be a clue. "All Hail" is a low slung groove of a song with malevolent feedback flickering around the edges of the mix while the vocalist proclaims his dissatisfaction with the world in a controlled bark. It's rather great (AB)

The People Assembly "Swinewhale"

Difficult times often spawn difficult music. Leicester's The People Assembly are, like For I, The Badger, deeply unhappy with the state of this reality and spit that fury over a stomping beat and cascading distorted guitar. This is another one we missed at the time, but the beauty of Bandcamp is that you can time travel. Essential listening, though we're sure they've become even more enraged since it was released. (AB)

Dead Leaves "We Are Dust"

They're not paying us to review them every issue, we promise, but if they will insist on releasing killer singles at such conveniently regular intervals we'll keep covering them. "We Are Dust" alternates between a shouted refrain of the title and a Bowie-esque verse. Dead Leaves are taking this "not being shit" thing seriously. (AB)

Noise Factory United "Cloud Pleaser"

NFU's newest single is a wonderful slice of cool as fuck breezy-yet-wonky indie pop with a hint of shoegaze guaze hovering in the background. Not as immediate as "Ladyhammer" but a real grower nonetheless. In the last year they've released increasingly brilliant music, which bodes very well for their forthcoming vinyl debut. (AB)

wülv "Dirge Disco"

The debut single from wülv is aptly-titled. Layers of scuzzy guitars create a pleasing dirge over the robotic march of a drum machine, with vocals echoing repetitively around the back. Think early Sisters of Mercy or the Venus Fly Trap. It's all over in under three minutes and none the worse for it. B-side Behind the Door is a heavier affair, relentlessly pounding its way into your brain by taking the same musical ingredients, speeding them up and stretching them out for twice as long into a hypnotic, uncoiling serpent of a song. Looking forward to hearing these live and loud. (DA)

Headswitcher "One I Wanted"

Ever imagined what a "Thirteen" era Teenage Fanclub song (specifically "Norman 3") played in the style of Foo Fighters would sound like? Well, here are Headswitcher to make your imagination a reality. They've really nailed this; the slacker chord sequence is perfect, and the melody couldn't be better if it tried. Headswitcher might present as a hard rock band, but a secret Lemonheads, Big Star, or Sloan is hiding in there, and we're all onboard with that. (AB)

Stereo Causes "Stick It"

Genuinely delighted to report that Stereo Causes' new single "Stick It" is an absolute better that's finally broken free of the Cobain shackles. This a band finding its own voice in pummelling metal-tinged grunge. A massive leap for Stereo Causes, more of this please. (AB)

Bitter Sweet Smile "Breathless" EP

If you are a fan of 80's and 90's rock music, you will love BSS's 2nd EP! Memorable guitar hooks, a driving rhythm section and a fantastic vocal interplay showcase that BSS are a force to be reckoned with. I personally loved Eat You Alive, a Bon Jovi inspired number which featured a solo that could give Richie Sambora a run for his money. Overall, the Breathless was a blast to listen to and I look forward to seeing what BSS do next! (LS)

Moon Haze "Come (With You)"

Another chunk of expertly played pop-metal from Moon Haze, a band who are rapidly becoming one of the best in the region. "Come (With You)" (spelled far less provocatively than it was written on the set-list at the Lab) is a song that's not afraid to repeat its rock solid chorus in a way that would have Cindy Lauper nodding in approval. Their debut album is going to be immense, if this run of singles is anything to go by. (AB)

thistle. "Pieces"

They've only gone and done it! Newly moved to Manchester, thistle's latest sounds like no one else. Sure, there are nods to the Valentines in the wall of noise, but even that's handled in a way that is unique to this young Northampton trio. THIS is it, *this* is what we've been hoping from them for a few years. Genuinely excellent. (AB)

Scarlet Grey's Goblin Arcade "Emergency Mode"

In solo guise from the day job in Queen Eleanor's Cross, Scarlet Grey presents electro-pop in the vein of Visage with a touch of Bowie and Billy McKenzie. This kind of thing used to sneak onto Top of The Pops back in the 80s, whether it'll sneak onto your playlists is up to you. (AB)

Cheap Bleach "Swear"

Cheap Bleach have showcased the power of their songwriting with the release of their newest single. From the start, the song hooks you in with its Microwave inspired guitar riff and breakneck drumming. The chorus is anthemic and it is hard to resist the urge to not scream the lyrics out loud every time it comes around. Overall, 'Swear' is Cheap Bleach's best song yet and a must listen for fans of emo and post-hardcore. (LS)

ALBUMS

72% "I'm Not Happy And That's On You Three"

If a three-word review of 72%'s latest were ever required, the writer could type 'heavy as fuck' and head out for a pint without feeling they'd missed anything. The music is a knotted mix of complex, almost math-rock slamming up against noise, metal, and free jazz. There are riffs that serve more as accents to the pummelling beats than anything you'd hum, screamed vocals, even softer moments that veer (perilously) close to Primus. Mostly, we're reminded (as previously mentioned when we reviewed the first single) of Sandy Duncan's Eye and GodHeadSilo, though there's also a bit of 90's Liverpool geniuses Mazey Fade to be found in the 9 tracks. John Peel would have absolutely loved 72%, and we're certain they would have been called in to record a session for his legendary Radio One show. If we were to pick a highlight, it would have to be "Killing is Bad Maybe?" which introduces sax over a droning piece of post-rock that Tortoise would have been proud of. Heavy as fuck. (AB)

Vibrio "Iron In The Soul"

The kind of neo-classical ambience Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson specialised in before his untimely death at the age of 48. Alongside layers of murky piano and plaintive strings are moments of electronic laptop glitch not a million miles from Fennesz's early 2000's work for Mego. Elsewhere we're treated to 'Rossz Csillag Alatt Született' style orchestral swells minus the hammering breakcore Venetian Snares used to lift them out of just being pretty music for car adverts. When beats do appear, they're so mangled by bitcrushing and the Buffer Overflow VST, that nothing remotely danceable remains. Having said that, 'Unravel' features almost trip-hop drums that fair propel the back half of the track along. 'In Flux' introduces vocal samples into the rich sonic tapestry. An intriguing bag of pretty yet often familiar sounds that begs to be listened to in the liminal times between midnight and 3am. (AB)

LIVE



China Shop Bull and Marabar Caves UFO, Racecourse Pavillion, 12/02/2026

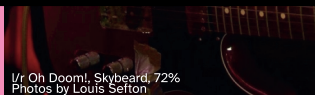
The Racecourse Pavillion is an important venue in Northampton's punk and post-punk past and a natural home to old hands **The Marabar Caves**. Going on very late for an opener (no idea what happened to **Coda Rushing**), the Caves delivered their usual blistering set of high energy punk rock 'n' roll. Although the band were as charismatic and entertaining as ever, the drumming was thunderously loud throughout, sometimes overpowering the guitars and lending a slightly absurd spectacle to the occasion, with Bill and Tony gurning and cavorting in front of what sounded like an artillery barrage. Meanwhile bassist Duncan looked serenely on.

Leeds' **China Shop Bull** are the real deal and we're probably lucky to see them in such an intimate venue. With the classic gang member/criminal look of the early Happy Mondays, the six members of the band wouldn't look out of place sprinting from your local Tesco with an armful of purloined bacon. Mixing multiple genres (ska/rock/rap/rave) but with a very definite sound, CSB played a tight, punchy set that was punk in its true essence and to a crowd that was properly into it. Good musicians all, the guitarist in particular was excellent, like a yorkshire Tom Morello with a Henry Rollins bark, always playing to the song with both precision and aggression. A great band that will hopefully go on to great things. Catch them again at the Pavillion in June. Special mention to Tina, Ian and the rest of the wonderful folk in the **Umbrella Fair Organisation** who put these more left field shows on. Long may they remain. (AS)

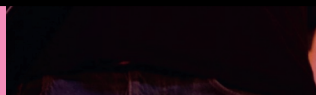
LIVE



72%, Skybeard, Oh Doom! The Lab, 17/01/2026



l/r Oh Doom!, Skybeard, 72%
Photos by Louis Sefton



Recently, a promotions team based in Northampton shared a picture of their packed Black Prince show, and wrote 'who says there's no music scene in Northampton?' This reassuringly drew a lot of "who is saying that??" from Shoetown residents. A packed show at the Lab on the 17th January demonstrated that the Northampton music scene is still going strong today. While the gig was promoted last minute, the room was filled to the brim and there was a positive atmosphere throughout the night as people gathered to watch each band perform.

First on was **Skybeard**, who delivered an epic set of exclusively instrumental tracks. Matt Farmer's guitar playing alternated between ethereal solos and crushing riffs. Dave Abdy, known for his funk infused playing in the Good Fridays, transformed into a different kind of bass player by using arpeggios, bass chords and distortion to create room-shaking basslines. Lastly, Al Hay's drumming was dynamic yet tight and showcased his ability to jump between different time signatures. With their heavy riffage and atmospheric instrumentals, it was easy to envision them as a support act for Tool or Mogwai. I look forward to seeing them live at the Lab again in April, when they play alongside Cheap Bleach, wülv's and Kieran Stowell!

Next band to grace the stage was **Oh Doom!** from Hertfordshire/North London. Blending together shoegaze, doom metal and post-hardcore, their sound was apocalyptic, yet hauntingly beautiful. Clean guitars and vocal harmonies gave way to doom laden instrumentals that were raw, chaotic yet full of emotion. Each song felt like it could have belonged in a science fiction film, it was like I was no longer standing in a small venue in Northampton but in a crumbling city, watching the world burn around me. My personal favourite track was 'This is Not Home', a reflection of the dark times this world is going through right now.

Lastly, it was time for the headliner, which was **72%**. The moment they started playing, I knew that I was in for a wild ride. Drawing inspiration from bands such as the Dillinger Escape Plan and Converge, their sound was pure, unbridled chaos. Joshua Ryan's creative use of dissonance and effects such as pitch shifting, Joe Brown's pounding basslines and Joel Henries' simple but powerful drumming blended together into a wall of sound that hit me harder than a ten tonne truck. 72% are definitely one of the loudest bands I have seen live but their music is certainly a blessing to my ears and I look forward to taking a deep dive into their discography! (LS)



The Sins of the Modfather

Nix Nene writes

I've trawled the dark web and emerged soiled and empty handed. I've been bounced between pay phones like a 21st Century Dirty Harry. I've been scammed, hoodwinked, swindled and misled. Finally, following a clandestine meeting in Jeyes Jetty, I have managed to secure a ticket to the **Molotovs** sold out show at the Black Prince, a screenshot of a QR code on a burner phone. This better be good.

But first, **Rolla**.

Where do I begin? Lumpen, stolid indie of the worst kind. Imagine Oasis fronted by five sneering Guigsy's and you're only halfway there. This is wretched swaggering bilge of the lowest order. Sunglasses indoors - check, massive coats - check, scowling faces spewing out facile wannabe anthems - check. Awful in concept and hideous in execution, Rolla are the death of music and beauty.

Sometimes glimpsing something through a crack in a door is all you need, and so it is with the ultimate style over substance act, The Molotovs. Pin sharp, Paul Weller via Sting's Ace Face in Quadrophonia, the band certainly look the part. They sound it too. But let us not forget that behind every iconic look is a bellboy and a pissed off Phil Daniels. So it is with the Molotovs. Reality can never live up to the hype and I'm reminded of the Towers of London, a band who's cartoonish take on the Sex Pistols was laughed at in 2005, but today would be lauded as *"the most exciting band around"* and the saviours of rock music. We are in a post parody world and a risible mod revival act are at the spearhead. The Jam were pretty good in their day but everything they've influenced has been shite and Weller has a lot to answer for, the Molotovs being the latest in a long line of his crap, Rickenbacker toting acolytes. When he arrives at the pearly gates, hopefully St Peter will remember the sins of the Modfather and send him on a one way trip to hell. No doubt on the back a gaudy, souped up Vespa. As for the Molotovs, next year they'll be too big for the Prince, too big for Northampton even. Maybe they'll do something original. Maybe they'll disappear completely. Whatever happens we should expect more from our saviours.

◀REWIND

We look back at local releases from before our 1st issue



tvål "tvål"
Cracked Plastic
(originally released February 2025)

Former members of Kettering psychedelic rockers Thee Telepaths, Dean Cumming and Thomas J. Wright are pursuing a new electronic direction in Tvål. Fuzzy vintage synths and motorik beats give the whole thing a late-70s sci-fi feel, while the album cover's eerily saturated photograph of concrete fountains in an outdoor shopping arcade clearly position it as a product of the haunted generation. It wouldn't be out of place on a label like Castles in Space or Clay Pipe Music. Cumming's gently-placed and processed vocals complement the spaced-out musical settings beautifully, but it's when the perfectly pitched synth melodies take flight that the album really comes alive. The gorgeous second track, Circles, sounds like something from the golden age of Kosmische Musik, capturing the mood and ambience perfectly. There's even a song named after Klaus Weiss, the legendary German drummer. The extended noisy jams of their previous outfit have found focus and clarity in this new project – sometimes a different approach pays off, and in this case it certainly has. They've been played on 6 Music already and new material should be on the way soon. Tvål is a genuinely exciting rebirth and this is one of my favourite records of 2025 (DA)

AVC: Tell us about your musical background, previous bands and how you came to singing

Bev: My parents were hugely into music; mum being a DJ in the 70s and my Pops writes songs and plays guitar. He'd sing to me and my sister when we were a little. He'd let us choose a song from an LP at bedtime too. My sister and I used to love Europe's 'Carrie', otherwise it had to be Whitesnake 'Still of the night'!

I'm mostly a 70s rock chick at heart, but have been enjoying a lot of 90s alternative rock, grunge and punk lately.

I used to go to sleep with my walkman on, with my favourite cassettes of Aerosmith, Free, or Bad Company, or radio tape recordings of everything else from Alanis to Zeppelin!

I was surprisingly shy with my singing. I'd wait until the house was empty before singing along to anything. I also wrote poems and lyrics from a young age, but I just didn't know who to share them with.

Roll on to 2019 after a bottle of Red, my husband heard me singing and encouraged me to find a band. After one nerve racking audition I joined a covers band, but after a few rehearsals, covid struck and it ended.

Luckily, the guitarist and bass player were in another established covers band and they reached out to me. The B List covers band was formed and we played our first gig December 2021, with our last gig New Year's Eve 2024. I called it a day because I wanted to concentrate on my songwriting, and to follow my love for Rock.

AVC: how did you end up running Audioworks?

B: I like supporting local artists, and when I heard The Usual Suspects were coming to my local pub I made the effort to go along and sit outside in the rain with my roast dinner watching them. I struck up a conversation with Andy (Drummer) and learned he owned Audio Works Rehearsal Studios. I kept in touch with him and The B List began using it as a regular rehearsal space

Andy informed me about the sale of Audio Works and I realised how much I loved it and wanted to make it my own. The rest is history!

AVC: How have you found being a woman in the very male orientated world of running a rehearsal space?

B: The change of management at first was always going to cause a little bit of uncertainty. A lot of the customers spoke to me and asked if I was going to make lots of changes. I'm quite house proud and those that use the studios know that I have added a few 'home comforts'; coat hooks, and specifically for the ladies there are free sanitary items in the toilet.

Over the course of 18 months, there has been a noticeable increase in female customers, from solo singers to female fronted bands becoming regulars. Lots of them have said to me that Audio Works feels like a safe, clean and comfortable space to use. That's what I wanted to create, not just for the women, but for everyone.

It is sad that men appear to dominate the music world, but being a female artist myself, I feel this has just created more opportunity today where there are 'gaps' for a lot of the talent that's out there yet to be discovered. I encourage any girls reading this to get in touch even if it's just to come to sing, practice instruments, or to meet like-minded people to start their own group. I can answer any of your questions!

AVC: If you could go back in time, what would you do differently at the start of the Audio Works adventure?

B: It's difficult to answer because I did everything I could within my means. Everything I did got it to where it is today, and we're seeing more new artists coming through the doors that enjoy the refreshed space.

While there's always things I'd do extra with more money, as long as I can fix or change the things that aren't working so well, then that's my biggest priority! As long as the customers are happy and comfortable, and that they see I really do care, I'm happy. But I suppose, if anything could have changed, the torn flags that are hanging out front!! I haven't yet found the company that did these originally, but I have a new design in the pipeline.

AVC: Tell us a bit about Bitter Sweet Smile: how do you come to be involved with the band?

B: After my mother passed away in

June, I decided life is too short to miss opportunities.

I had a message from a drummer in an originals rock band searching for a female vocalist to complete their 6-piece art-rock outfit, Bitter Sweet Smile. I wasn't sure I'd fit, but as soon as I spoke with Chris, the other vocalist, we absolutely clicked and had the same ideas and passions as me. He shared the music and I was inspired. I was really impressed with the talent, drive and dedication they all have.

Six months later, we've recorded enough music for a full album, and have just released our first EP. "Breathless".

I love the band. We always have a good time, and we're not afraid to speak up openly with each other. We are not just a band though, we are a team.

That's the most important thing when there's a group that have to work so closely together on something you all have individually invested in.

AVC: what are your goals for Audioworks and BSS?

B: I like to support other artists, and if that means I can promote them or buy a ticket to a gig, then I will where possible.

I'd really love to be in collaboration on a local annual festival. These things take a lot of planning, but you never know!

As for Bitter Sweet Smile, we'd love world domination!... ha!

But seriously, we dream of being bigger and better tomorrow than we are today.

We're currently receiving 30,000 views a month on our social media platforms. We've already seen a jump in followers, and the music streams are clocking up nicely. We would love to have our music used for the likes of a Tom Hardy or Guy Ritchie movie! Or perhaps used for an advert.

We talk about our goals and dreams regularly: to play Wembley is one, to tour the world is another, or support a well-known artist, and to earn enough from it that we can all quit our day jobs!

Isn't this every artists dream?

Every now and again an artist breaks through, and we're all secretly hoping it will be us!

We attempted to interview wülvS and this is all we got in return

"to understand wülvS you must become wülvS"



Cook Once, Play Better

Jordan Jones explains how not to feel like crap on gig days (and nights)

This is what gigging life looks like for most original bands midweek: work nine to five, load in at the venue for 5:30, throw a bass amp into the boot like you're disposing of a dead body, and realise the only thing you've eaten all day is whatever you shoved into your bag that morning. Enter stage left: a meal of either a kebab from a one-star food hygiene establishment that you'll regret tomorrow, or a crisp sandwich when you get home paired with an ambitious amount of alcohol. Insanity, isn't it? And yet every band has said it at some point: "I just don't have time to eat properly on gig days." Absolute rubbish.

Here's the thing: you absolutely CAN eat properly — you just have to get ahead! Gig days we burn more calories than normal so you can afford to eat a few more carbohydrates, as we are burning more calories we really need to cleverly feed ourselves - not in a scary meal-prep influencer way. In a normal, human way. A little thinking the night before saves you from terrible decisions when you're tired, loud, and emotionally attached to boss man from the kebab shop. Start the night before - roast a whole chicken the night before, it's cheap, easy to cook, one tray to wash up, and suddenly you've got multiple meals sorted. If you live with a partner who definitely has stopped caring about your latest track after you turned 26 congratulations — you've also fed them for days and avoided a domestic incident. Even breakfast can be a get-ahead!

Breakfast

Mushrooms, spinach and eggs on toast
This isn't fancy or bourgeois — it's just clever. Eggs give you protein for vocal cords and posture muscles. Spinach brings iron and magnesium for oxygen and muscle relaxation (goodbye tight shoulders). Mushrooms quietly support energy and immunity, which is useful

when you're sharing air with strangers and shouting into microphones. It's warm, filling, and your throat will thank you for not starting the day with a cold cereal apology. Cook the mushrooms and spinach in a pan the night before and your preferred method of scrambling eggs, pop it on a bowl, cover and put in the fridge and microwave in the morning.

Lunch

Chicken Pesto pasta salad

This is where the chicken really earns its keep. A big box of chicken pesto pasta salad means steady energy all afternoon and no panic-buying beige food at 4pm. Carbs fuel the evening, protein keeps you upright, olive oil and herbs bring actual antioxidants it eats cold and travels well. You can prepare all this at the time you're preparing the breakfast! Add in your favourite vegetables to the salad, the more colour the better.

Post load in gig snack

Chicken drum sticks

A perfectly unhinged but incredibly effective thing to eat to bridge the gap between lunch and whatever you eat when you get home and it servers the trauma bond with the dodgy takeaway!

After the gig, when your ears are ringing and your nervous system is still doing jazz hands, keep it simple: cheese on toast. Five minute comfort food and enough fuel to recover without upsetting your stomach or your sleep. You'll feel much better in the morning!

This isn't about being perfect or joyless. It's about making food work for the life you actually live. Cook once. Think cleverly. Feed yourself like you'd feed a bandmate you semi tolerate. You'll play better, recover faster, and maybe even stop eating crisps inside bread like a Victorian orphan.

Good walnut. Must dash. Inferior
skiver. £1.99 ono 07899848512
Edinburger

MIT BITTY I FROT i



Very reliable. So nice would be
ideal weeding cart. Taxed and
minted. £2.80 or may swoon.

07000 000050
Wet Colder

NICE IN ALMERIA

150°C. 200 mirrors melted
- blue and silver fug. Steer
clear or you is history. Pack
and trip out for 25k miles

1.1. Bl
miles. Ta
ill Nov.
immo

PE
O

1.4. 2
Silver.
Goo

07005

The Flatman Crossword

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

Across

3. Oasis single longing for support(5,2,2)

6. Spoiled and unruly Charlie XCX LP (4)

7. Sum 41 single, run within fit lap (3,3)

9. Cliff Richard ponders hellish female (5,5)

10. NYC bands album El Pintor also contains the artist (8)

11. Shakespears Sister song demand you do not move (4)

Down

1. George Michael's onomatopoeic band (4)

2. Beck ponders satanic barnet (6,7)

4. That song The Village People did (1,1,1,1)

5. Madonna's icy, chart topping single (6)

8. Decent Cast single (7)



A Void Disaster with our Monthly Horoscopes by Mondo Penumbras

(Terry Kinesis is missing)

Aries (March 21- Apr 20) Beware of burn out. It's like the myriad of cigarettes ends strewn upon the entrance to the jobcentre. Do you put them in the bin, or puff upon their disgusting yet alluring remains? (do the latter).

Taurus (Apr 21- May 21) You have remained strong with your New Years resolutions, though some were perhaps ill thought out and unrealistic. You are not a quitter.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21) Family life with children can be draining so perhaps it's time to try something new. Investing in a leading tobacco firm can be fun for children of all ages. Or try taking the family to a falconry experience with designated

smoking areas as a treat.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22) Fuck off.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22) Your smugness levels are in abundance, even irritating usually harmless garden birds which will now administer a ceaseless pecking upon your person. The only option is to buy a kestrel for your own safety.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22) Your heart is a mire. Your soul is the remains of a smashed galleon. Your brain is an uncharged e-cigarette waiting to be plugged in. Don't plug it in. Put it in the bin.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22) Numbers aren't your strong point this month. You gaze helplessly

into the abyss of math, befuddled by trigonometry and baffled by Pythagorean theorem. It's proven (though there is no evidence as its all been hidden) that smoking improves numeracy.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21) If you are looking for love, having teeth resembling a rusted portcullis is the new alluring fad. It didn't stop Shane McGowan being sexy right? So what better time to start dismantling that oral health?

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21) Norms and conventional thinking has impeded your search for the perfect partner. There's nothing more provocative than someone with a ciggy dangling out of their mouth with a ferocious bird of prey perched on their arm.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 20)

Don't let the rain dampen your appetite for adventure. It's actually a fact that all falcons are more fun in the rain, and all our the smoking areas at The Wheezing Kestrel Falcon Experience have roofs.

Aquarius (Jan 21 – Feb 19) ... and that's not actually illegal, contrary to some 'concerns' by the 'woke police'. They are not considered substantially enclosed areas and do - in fact - comply with the 2006 health act. So Aquarians should be wary of misinformation and get their facts right this month

Pisces (Feb 20 – March 20) During national Pylon day later this month be prepared for a shock.

a void collective presents

BULLETIN
HOUSE OF CARDS
GRIM FORTUNE
UPAL



THE LAB March 26th
Doors 7:30pm
Free/£1 non-members
<https://linktr.ee/avoidcollective>



a void collective presents

Cheap Bleach
Skybeard
wülvS
Kieran Stowell

APRIL 30th **THE LAB**
free/£1 non-members



Cheap Bleach Skybeard wülvS Kieran Stowell doors 7:30pm

AND! March 27th at the Lab! Booked literally moments before we went to press!

Bio-Exile, Moon Haze, wülvS & Chris Watson

Free, or a quid on the door for non-members

We can only keep doing this if you keep coming and supporting the bands. The shows are free, tell your friends! Tell your mum! Tell your work colleagues! Northampton has amazing things going on! Not only are we doing stuff but there's Picky New Promotions, and Hushed, and Sketchhead, and SBD. Things are happening! Don't miss out!

Contributors

Editor: Alex Botten
Deputy Editor: Andrew Slack
Guest Editor: Cheryl Botten-Smith
Writers/Contributors:
Maevs Darkhorse
Louis Sefton
Simon Flatman
Nix Nene
Mondo Penumbra
Jordan Jones

Kai Pearson
Dave Abdy
Russell Heyworth
Pam Law
Tanya Falconer
Shiela Cox
Jazmine Higgins
Kirsty Wilkins

Finances: Cheryl Botten-Smith & Alex Botten
Printed by Tradeprint.co.uk

Want to play one of our shows or write for us? Drop us a line at <https://linktr.ee/avoidcollective>

Next Issue: Bumper festival edition!